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LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

Legislators continued to introduce bills during this third week of 2002, with 95 new bills making their appearance. Privacy-related bills appeared to be most prominent among the new offerings. Governor Davis cited the need for financial privacy legislation in his State of the State speech. There is also the possibility of a financial privacy initiative being on the ballot in the near future.

LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS

Legislative policy committees met on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Today is the last day for policy committees to hear and report to fiscal committees those fiscal bills that were introduced in their house in 2001. In addition to hearing bills, some committees have been holding subject matter hearings on various issues.

The last day for bills to be sent to the Legislative Counsel for drafting is Friday, January 25. The last day for bills to be introduced is February 22.

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

Governor Davis has introduced his \$100 billion budget for 2002-03. The initial legislative response has been guarded, at best. One thing the Legislature and the Governor agree on is that there currently is at least a \$12 billion budgetary shortfall.

The following are some budgetary highlights relating to various justice-related activities and programs:

COURTS

- \$120 million to fund Proposition 36 (Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2001). These funds would be used for a variety of programs aimed at addressing the needs of individuals convicted of various drug-related crimes. Although the courts will have the authority to impose sentence on such offenders, the Department of

Alcohol and Drug Programs will administer the programs.

- \$14.4 million for increased costs for services and benefits provided to the trial courts and trial court employees throughout the counties.
- \$13.4 million for security at trial court facilities.
- \$2.3 million for court interpreters to assist non-English speaking defendants in court proceedings.
- \$802,000 for family and children services (case processing, mediators, evaluators, and investigators in certain courts).

In contrast to the augmentations cited immediately above, the governor is proposing the following reductions to the trial courts:

- \$23.2 million to reflect a reduction in the operations budget of each trial court by varying amounts.
- \$7.2 million to reflect the delayed implementation of new jury reform programs.

Criminal Fines

- The governor proposes a 20 percent increase on criminal fines, which includes traffic violations. The increase would generate an estimated \$45.8 million in additional revenue for the General Fund. It should be noted that the current combined state (\$7) and county (\$10) penalty assessments constitute a minimum of 170 percent of the base fine (\$17 for every \$10 or portion thereof the base fine).
- The governor also proposes to impose a 10 percent increase on civil filing fees. The increase would generate an estimated \$15 million in additional revenue for the General fund.